

RELIGION

NATURAL AND REVEALED

A SERIES OF PROGRESSIVE LESSONS
FOR JEWISH YOUTH

BY
N. S. JOSEPH

REVISED EDITION

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The three great words of Religion are—God, Duty, Immortality
SCHILLER

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PREFACE TO PRESENT EDITION

THE first Edition of this work was published about twenty-seven years ago by the Trustees of the Jacob A. Franklin Fund, who purchased from me the copyright, subject to certain conditions. The copyright having reverted to me under one of those conditions, I have lately been urged to prepare a new Edition, with such changes as naturally result from the advance of knowledge and the changes of view consequent thereon.

My dear and revered friend, the Rev. Simeon Singer, minister of the New West-End Synagogue, whose recent decease has bereft the Jewish community of a religious teacher unequalled in nobility of character, high ideals, and scholarly attainments, was foremost in urging me to undertake this task, and his wish was seconded by his learned kinsman, Mr. Israel Abrahams, M.A., Reader in Rabbinic to the University of Cambridge. Both assured me that they had, for many years—and, indeed, until the book had gone out of print—found it of great value in their practical work as teachers of Religion.

The changes necessary to a new edition of a religious text-book that would be abreast of recent knowledge, and of those modern ideas shared by the majority of intelligent men, seemed to me to involve a labour and responsibility beyond my powers, especially having regard to other duties lately undertaken by me. Hence

I at first declined to entertain the project; but, after much hesitation, eventually yielded to the persuasions of these two friends, they promising their good counsel and active aid.

Both have most amply fulfilled their promises; and I have, further, had the advantage of the assistance of my esteemed friend, Mr. Claude G. Montefiore, M.A., Hibbert Lecturer (1892), who generously lent his aid by perusing the entire work, and by criticising my revisions and additions. I deem myself fortunate in thus having had the benefit of the scholarly knowledge and practical experience of these three distinguished religious teachers and preachers; and the best indication of my gratitude to them is that I have adopted most of their invaluable suggestions. None of these kind advisers, however, must be held responsible for the work as it stands.

It is a great grief to me that my ever-to-be-lamented friend Mr. Singer has not lived to see the publication of the book, which he incited me to reproduce in the revised form. It is right I should add that, following his advice, I have made as few revisions as possible—fewer, indeed, than I had originally intended. Many parts of the book would probably have assumed a different character if I had now been writing it for the first time.

It will be found that, in various places, I have added sundry notes and quotations, so as to give increased force to the text. I hope that these, being chiefly the thoughts of great thinkers, will enhance the value of the work.

October 1906.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS book has been written in scanty moments of leisure, snatched from the pursuit of an arduous profession. It therefore, doubtless, contains many imperfections, which would not have existed if the work had been the result of a steady and continuous effort.

It was commenced some years ago, at the suggestion of a dear departed friend, the Rev. BARNETT ABRAHAMS, and was discontinued when his death deprived me of his promised co-operation. It was resumed a few months since, the necessity of such a work having been, for many years, constantly pressed upon me, first, during my connection with many of our communal institutions, and lately in the education of my own children. This last exigency gave the most powerful impulse to the progress of a work for which a too scanty leisure hardly qualified me.

While there is no lack of excellent books professing to teach our Religion, they all partake of a more or less dogmatic character, little in harmony with the inquiring spirit of the age. The rationalistic tendencies of modern thought have administered a rude shock to all religions. They have caused many good, truth-loving parents to be less zealous than of old about the religious education of their children, the modern notion being that Religion and Reason are in some degree antagonistic. Children, hardly free from the restraints

of the nursery, quickly imbibe, or perhaps inherit, the prevailing spirit of inquiry, and ask intelligent questions which would have surprised and horrified our grandfathers, but which must yet be answered.

The day for dogmatic religious teaching is at an end. For infants it may suffice. In the undeveloped intellect of the little child it may fill a temporary gap ; but to the mind of an intelligent child, accustomed by the modern system of education to the exercise of the reasoning faculties, the teaching of Religion by a purely dogmatic method is useless, perhaps mischievous. The lesson, if swallowed, is not digested. If retained in the memory, it is, perhaps, retained only to crop up in years of maturity, not as a part of a living Faith, but as a pretty fiction, an exploded belief of credulous childhood.

With our Holy Religion this should not be. For, starting with few postulates, it makes but small demand on blind faith, and is essentially a reasonable Religion, that can bear the bright glare of inquiry. There is, therefore, no excuse with us, as with other creeds, for dogmatic teaching.

The object, then, of this work is to present a rational view of our Religion—to give the “reason why,” wherever possible, for its principles, its ordinances and practices, and so to raise our Faith to the higher dignity of a firm, intelligent Belief.

Although the principal ceremonial observances ordained in the Pentateuch will be found to have a place in these pages, the work must not be regarded as a compendium of our Ritual. It would have been impossible to render it such, without touching upon debatable ground, and alluding to points upon which our co-religionists are not altogether unanimous. The

omission of these debatable subjects (which probably few will notice) is therefore not accidental but intentional, the work having been written in a sense that may render it acceptable to Jews of all shades of opinion. The omission, however, to those who notice it, will be useful, as showing that the differences which divide the Jewish camp are really insignificant, and that upon all truly important points of doctrine and observance, Jews are unanimous.

A few words must be said about the scope of the work, the style, or rather styles, in which it is written, and the mode in which it should be studied. The book is intended to teach our Religion *progressively*, under the two heads—Natural and Revealed Religion. The first principles and most important observances and laws, enunciated in the simplest language, suitable to the capacity of the youngest children, will be found in the earlier Chapters of both parts of the work. As the work progresses, the subjects become less easy; and as those subjects are not intended for the perusal of very young pupils, the child-like language of the earlier Chapters is dropped, but a sufficiently simple style is preserved. The later Chapters (except Chapter XII.) and the Appendices, treating of subjects of inherent difficulty, are meant only for the perusal of advanced pupils, and consequently no attempt has been made to couch these in language of strained simplicity. Hence the variation in the mode of treatment, which, though it may affect the unity of the style, will probably enhance the utility of the work.

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RELIGION, NATURAL AND REVEALED

PART I NATURAL RELIGION

CHAPTER I

THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD

EVERYTHING in the world must have had a maker. You cannot imagine it possible that anything, however simple, made itself.

If I showed you a piece of stone, and told you that the stone made itself, you would laugh, and tell me that you could not believe such nonsense. And you would be quite right. You would tell me that the stone had no power to move, or to think, or to do anything—much less to make itself.

And if I showed you a plant, with some beautiful flowers growing on it, and I told you that the plant made itself, you would laugh still more, and would say that you knew better. You would tell me, perhaps, that the plant had grown from a little seed, and that the little seed had come from another plant, just like the plant I was showing you; and that the first seed that ever became a

plant, could never have been clever enough to make itself in such a wonderful way that the seed should bring forth a plant, and the plant a flower, and the flower a seed, and the new seed a plant again, and so on, year after year, till now.

And if I showed you an animal—say a bird—and told you that the bird made itself, you would laugh at me again. You would tell me the same as you told me about the plant. You would say that the first bird could never have been clever enough to make itself in such a wonderful way; and that if the bird had made itself, it would have been clever enough to keep itself alive for ever, which we know no animal can do. And of course you would be right.

But, suppose some one told you that all the world, as you see it, came by chance—that the mountains and valleys, the beautiful trees, and the sweet-smelling flowers, the beasts of the field, and men and women, and you too, all came by chance, you would think this idea still more laughable. You would say that chance never did anything half or quarter so orderly. You would call to mind that when you upset your desk by accident or by chance, the contents tumbled out in the most disorderly way, and you would have been very much astonished if it had been otherwise. You would call to mind that the things you see in the world are very regular and very orderly. You would remember that you never saw trees grow upside down, or the sun shine in the middle of the night, or anything heavy refuse to fall to

the ground—all which might happen, if things were arranged by chance.

You would also remember (and if you did not, some one ought to remind you) that all the things we see around us on this beautiful Earth, seem to be arranged for one *design* or purpose, for the good of living creatures, and above all, of man. And we know very well that if there is a design or purpose in anything, that thing cannot be said to be the work of chance, but must have had some one to design it.

I dare say you have, at some time or other, closely observed a steam-engine ; and if you have, I doubt not that you have thought it a very wonderful thing. Even if you look at it from a distance, as it almost flies along the iron rails, dragging after it waggons piled with goods, and carriages full of people, it seems a living wonder. But if you walk close up to it, while it is standing still, you will think it yet more wonderful. For you will see that it is made up of an enormous number of parts, some very strong, and some very delicate ; and if you ask how many pieces there are in it, you will be told that there are nearly four thousand, and that each one of those four thousand pieces is necessary to make the great giant move. And then you will think to yourself how clever the men must be who could make such a wonderful machine.

And if any one were to tell you that the steam-engine came together by chance, or that it was not made by an intelligent or clever maker, you would

tell him he was a stupid fellow to talk such nonsense. You would say, "I see here four thousand pieces of metal of different shapes and kinds, some large and some small, and I see that they fit into one another exactly; so they could not possibly have come together by chance; and I see also that there is a design or intention in their being so put together—namely, *to move*; and as there is a design or intention, there must have been somebody to design or intend, and that person, whoever he was, may be termed the maker of the engine, without whom that engine would never have been made." And this would be a very sensible answer for you to give.

I have been talking about a steam-engine, because it is a thing that most people have seen and looked at closely, and because also they know (or can learn by asking) how or by whom it was made.

But now I am going to talk of engines much more wonderful than the steam-engine. Perhaps you may see them with less wonder, because they make less noise; but when you look at them attentively, you will see in them even more to admire. And the more you look, you will find there is the more to be seen; and though, unlike the steam-engine, you will not find the maker's name written in letters of brass upon them, you will not be slow to find out who was the maker.

The engines I mean are the glorious sun and the tranquil moon, the twinkling stars, and the beautiful Earth on which we live. And I call them

engines, because they are known to move, to be always moving ; not like the steam-engine, by fits and starts, when water is poured in and heat applied ; but ever moving, ever working, never stopping to take rest, never even slackening speed for an instant.

Then, too, there are engines on the Earth itself, which we may look at more closely than we can at the sun, moon, and stars ; such, for example, as the animals that live on this Earth. Yes ; these, too, are engines, and many of them have more parts than the steam-engine itself, and these parts are much less likely to get out of order, and they need fuel or food less frequently, and they are capable of repairing themselves over and over again, when they wear out or get damaged, till they get so old that there is hardly anything left worth repairing.

Now, as we cannot talk of more than one of these engines at a time, let us take one as an example, one with which I believe you are better acquainted than any other ; I mean—*yourself*.

You will remember that the steam-engine is a running-machine. It moves, and drags a train after it ; but it can do nothing else. You, however, are something more. You are a reading and writing machine, a tasting and smelling machine, a seeing and feeling machine, a hearing and talking machine ; but the greatest wonder of all is that this machinery of yours is under the control or management of a something within you, which you cannot see, and which is called the *Will*, and that

this Will is guided by another unseen something within you, which we call *Reason*.

But as we can see neither the Will nor the Reason, we will let them alone for the present, and talk about the machinery only.

Look at your hand. How beautifully it is fitted for its purpose ! It can carry your heavy load of books, and it can thread the finest needle with the finest thread. It can hurl a heavy cricket-ball a very long way, and it can make the thinnest up-stroke with the finest pen. It can throw ; it can carry ; it can pull ; it can push ; it can lift ; it can crush ; it can bind ; it can loosen. Look at that great stout workman. He has just been lifting a hundredweight of grain with his brawny hands ! Look at him now. He is using the same hand to take out a little particle of dust that has been blown into his fellow-workman's eye !

I called you just now an engine. I think I must have been wrong. Why, your hand alone is a hundred engines all put together ; for it can do a hundred *different* things, and many quite *opposite* things.

Just look at your hand, and ask yourself if you think it became a part of your body by chance, or without design or express intention. Of course you will reply, that it was designed for the express purpose of doing all the things which we see it doing, just as the steam-engine was designed for the express purpose of *moving* and *dragging*. Therefore, we cannot help saying at least the same of the hand as we felt obliged to say of the steam-

engine, that the hand must have had a very clever maker ; and I think you would feel inclined to add that, as the hand is so much more wonderful than the steam-engine, and as no man, however clever, can make a true imitation of a hand with all its powers and movements, the maker of the hand must be far more clever than he who invented or made the steam-engine.

Now the hand is only one part of you. There are hundreds of other parts of the body quite as wonderful ; and the more you look into and investigate these matters, the more you will see to admire, and the more certain you will become that the maker of all these wonderful contrivances of your body must be a Being of mighty skill.

Perhaps you never thought before what a wonder you are. If not, I hope what I have told you will not make you conceited ; for let me tell you that there are other animals which, so far as their bodies are concerned, are quite as wonderful. There is the elephant, for example ; he has a trunk which can tear up a huge tree and can also pick up a pin. There is the camel, too, with an extra stomach, capable of holding enough spare water to enable him to travel a long distance in the desert without drinking.

There is not an animal that can be named, whose body is not truly wonderful in every point of its structure. And then, if we look more closely into the peculiarities and habits of each animal, we shall find how beautifully the body of each is suited to the climate in which it is to live : how

some are clothed with fur, others with wool, others with bristles, according to the heat or cold to which each is likely to be subject.

Then also we see how wonderfully it is contrived that life should be preserved as long as possible. For example, we know that all animals are liable to accidental injuries, and that they would soon die if those injuries were not repaired. But we see that the animal has in itself the materials for its own cure. If part of a steam-engine be broken or damaged, engineers must come with tools to mend it. The engine cannot mend itself. But animals are machines that can and do mend themselves. If the skin be broken in a living animal, or the flesh torn, there is a matter produced by the wound itself which heals it. Even if the bone of a living animal be broken, the broken edges give forth a liquid which soon hardens into solid bone, making the broken parts, if placed together, stick to one another, and form one sound bone again.

Is not that wonderful? And wherever we look we find something to admire, something to wonder at. I do not mean to say that we can always tell the design or object or use of everything, when we see it. But that is caused by our ignorance. At one time, people were much puzzled to know what could be the use of certain poisonous plants; but now they have found out that these plants which destroy life may, if used in a particular way and in very small quantities, serve as medicines to cure disease and so preserve life. And thus it may be with many other poisons and many other things

whose object we cannot at present understand. Perhaps, when the world becomes wiser, we shall know all about them too.

And, after all, those things which puzzle us are not the greatest or the most important points in the universe. The things we see every day are the greatest wonders. Sunrise and sunset, rain and snow, wind and hail, the change of the seasons, the growth of plants and animals—lifeless seeds becoming living flowers; lifeless eggs becoming living birds; life everywhere, in the sea, in the fields, in the rivers, in the forests, in the air; living things made to last till their place is taken by other living things like themselves; and every one of these living things full of machinery which seems perfection—these are wonders indeed!

You will remember we made up our mind that the steam-engine must have had a very clever maker. Now what shall we say of the World?

Do you know that, when I ask myself that question, I begin to have quite a poor opinion of the steam-engine? For I never knew a steam-engine to lay eggs, and bring forth a brood of little steam-engines, like that fine old hen with her large family of chickens. Nor did I ever know a steam-engine that was capable of doing anything else than *move*; nor did I ever know a steam-engine, that was out of order, get itself in order again without being doctored by an engineer. And still the steam-engine is a very wonderful thing, and must have had a very clever maker.

Well, what shall we say of the World?

I am sure you will agree with me in coming to this conclusion, that the World and its contents must have had a maker possessed of an intelligence, power, and cleverness, to which the intelligence, power, and cleverness of the engine-maker cannot bear the least comparison.

This great and wonderful Maker of the World and its contents we call GOD ; and what I have tried to prove to you is THE EXISTENCE OF A GOD, who designed and created the World.¹

¹ See Appendix I. (intended for teachers and advanced pupils).

CHAPTER II

THE UNITY OF GOD

PERHAPS you may ask, How am I to know that the world had only *one* Maker? How am I to know that there is only *one* God?

You might perhaps point to the steam-engine I talked about, and tell me it was made by several makers, and you might ask how you are to know that each wonder of the World had not a separate maker.

You would not be the first person who asked such a question. Indeed, in olden times, there were several nations who believed in almost any number of gods.

I am going to prove to you that these people were very foolish, and that it is right and reasonable to believe that there is only one God, the Creator of the whole World and of everything therein. This is what is meant by the Unity, or oneness of God.

Let me take you back to our old friend the steam-engine. Now, it is certainly true that the engine was made by several people; but one man only designed it. That is to say, there was one man only who first made a drawing or picture of it before it was begun. And that same man it was who settled how large it should be, and how

strong it should be, how much weight it should be able to drag, how fast it should be able to run, and how large and how small every one of the four thousand pieces of metal should be. And all the men who were employed in making the engine were just like so many machines, obeying the orders of the master-engineer, not daring to disobey, but following exactly the picture or design he had set before them.

It was only by this strict obedience that the engine could ever have been finished, and turn out to be a moving machine ; for if one of the workmen took it into his head to make one of the parts larger or smaller than was intended by the master-engineer, the engine would have turned out weak or unruly, or perhaps would never have been able to move at all.

So you see, after all, the whole engine might be said to be the work of one man ; for, in making it, the common workman, who put it together, had no more to do with the *design* or *intention* than the miners who dug out of the earth the metals of which it was made.

Indeed, if we look at the finished steam-engine, we shall at once see that one man only must have had the arrangement of it. If it were not so, the enormous number of parts would not fit into one another so exactly.

It is this exact fitting of the various parts, all pointing to one object or intention, which makes us feel sure that, however many hands put the engine together, one master-mind designed or arranged it.

Now, if I can show you that the Earth, nay, that the whole World is in this respect just like the steam-engine, that every little or great part exactly fits into some other part, and that each part, as well as the whole which is made up of the parts, points to one great object or designed intention, I think you will believe that, however many powers may have been used in making the great World, there was only *one God*, who was the Master-engineer of the World, who designed, ordained, arranged, and regulated it all.

Let us begin with the Earth itself. What do we find therein? We find coal in abundance, to warm our homes and cook our food; then iron, the material of all those tools with which we till the ground, make our clothing, our furniture, indeed everything that has to be shaped; the stone to build our houses, and lime and sand to join the stone together; and then, not the least of the treasures of the earth, we find springs of pure water bursting out of the hard rocks, flowing in little streams, and swelling into large rivers, always ready and at hand to quench our thirst. All capable of being used for the good of the inhabitants of this Earth.

Then let us consider the Sea. It is the great cistern, from which the sun and air draw up moisture. The moisture collects into clouds, the clouds fall in refreshing showers of rain upon the fields and forests, making the earth bring forth corn, and fruit, and flowers in abundance. And then the surplus water runs into rills, and the rills run into ditches, and the ditches into brooks, and

the brooks into rivers, and the rivers into the sea ; and so the water which came from the sea returns to the sea, so completing its circle of usefulness, and ready to begin anew a like circle of silent, useful work ; and all capable of being used for the good of the inhabitants of this Earth.

Next, let us consider the living things that swarm in the sea. There are shoals of fishes which yield food, sea-monsters which yield oil, and seaweeds which manure the fields near the sea-coasts ; all capable of being used for the good of the inhabitants of this Earth.

Then let us consider the Air. How wonderfully it is arranged ! We are always breathing a part of it. So, too, are the plants. Now you might think that, in course of time, all the air would be spent, or would become impure, through so many plants and animals breathing it ; and so it would, if it were not for a very beautiful arrangement.

The air (which, you know, you cannot see, and which you only feel when it blows against your face and when you call it wind) is made up of several parts, or different kinds of gas or air, mixed together. One of these parts (oxygen) animals inhale or breathe *in*, and when it has passed through their lungs, fanning and keeping alive the flame of life, they exhale it or breathe it out again, and it is then found to be entirely changed, and to be exactly like another part of the air (carbonic acid gas) which the plants breathe. And so, you see, the animals breathe out the very kind of air which the plants require.

But I have not told you all the wonders yet. This carbonic acid gas, which the plants and trees breathe, also becomes changed in passing through them, and when they have done with it, and exhale it or breathe it out (for plants, and trees also, breathe, although with organs quite unlike our lungs), it has become changed back again into oxygen—the very kind of air that we and all animals require to breathe.

Now, is not this wonderful? You see it cannot matter how many animals there are upon the earth to be supplied with air. For, however impure they make it, the plants and trees are quite sure to set it right again.

Surely such a fact as this is quite enough to show that the animals, the plants, and the air they breathe must have had one and the same Maker. For how could we imagine it possible that the animals were made by one maker, the plants by another, and the air they breathe by a third, and yet that this clever and beautiful arrangement could exist.

The example which I have here given is not an exceptional instance, but is one of many instances showing that, throughout the world, things depend one upon the other; and—still more wonderful—that what is useless to one object is thrown off from it, but is immediately taken up by another object, to which it is not only useful, but positively necessary.

And this is the great fact that we find in nature—*there is no waste.*

Now, if you inquire into the cause of this, you will find how it is that there is no waste. You will see that the objects of the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the mineral kingdom—in plain words, animals, plants, and the lifeless materials of the earth—have a way of changing places one with another. I will explain what I mean by an example.

Suppose we sow some beans; the rain moistens them; in course of time they will sprout. There is something in the seed which we call *life* (but which we do not at all understand), giving it the power of taking up a portion of the air, and of the water, and of the lifeless earth, and so the seed grows into a plant. It becomes larger and larger. At last it flowers; then the flowers drop off, and gradually the beans appear in their stead. A stem, a root, a number of leaves, a flower, and a quantity of beans (themselves seeds for a new crop of beans) seem all to have come from a simple seed. But they have really come from many things besides the seed. Something has come out of the earth, and something out of the air, and these some-things, which were before lifeless, have mixed with the little seed, and become part of the living plant. How, we do not know, and perhaps never shall.

Now, what becomes of the plant? Let us watch and find out. Suppose a horse eats the beans. The beans will become part of his flesh and blood, and muscles and bones, and so such part of the plant as is useful for food becomes part of an animal. As for the remainder, it is not wasted.

The leaves will fade and the stalks will wither ; but the leaves will crumble into dust at last, and become part of the earth again—a very fertile part, known as leaf-mould. The stalks and roots will do the same, if left to themselves ; but the farmer will perhaps burn them, and use the ashes for manure, which brings them to the same useful end ; for they become part of the earth again, ready next year to serve the same useful purpose ; perhaps not as part of a crop of beans, but for wheat, or barley, or mangold-wurzel, or something of that sort.

And, pray, bear this in mind. It is the *same* earth, the *same* lifeless soil, which becomes part of the beans, or part of the wheat, or part of the barley.

We have seen how the lifeless earth changes into, and forms part of, the living plant, and how a portion of the living plant changes into, and forms parts of, the living and moving animal. Let us watch the further changes.

The horse which ate the beans, of course, breathes ; and it has been found that part of his food goes to form the air which he exhales or breathes out.¹ So certain portions of the beans go back to the air, which, you will remember, was part of the nourishment of the growing bean. And more than that, as I told you before, it goes back just in the very state, fit and ready for the plants to breathe.

Then the ordure from the horse will contain

¹ Namely, the carbon of the carbonic acid gas which he exhales.

those portions of the beans which were not able to be changed into flesh or blood or muscle or bone ; and we know that this is turned to a very useful account as manure, forming part, and a very fertile part, of the ground, although so nasty and offensive to the smell. And perhaps, after all, the nasty smell is an advantage ; for it is a hint to us to bury the offensive matter in the ground, where it may be useful. Otherwise we should probably let it lie about, and it would not only be of no use, but would render the air of the neighbourhood unhealthy.

But what becomes of the horse ? In course of time it will die of old age. Its skin will be used for one purpose, and its hair for another, and perhaps its flesh will feed other animals ; but its bones will be burnt and ground for bone-earth, a most valuable manure ; and such parts of the poor old horse as cannot be turned to some profitable purpose will be buried in the earth, where it will become dust, very fertile dust, ready, like the bone-earth, to grow a crop of beans, or wheat, or barley of extra-fine quality.

So you see the changes take place, but never come to an end ; for nothing is wasted.¹ One thing depends upon the other, like the links of a chain. The chain is complete between the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral creations. They change places over and over again. It is the same

¹ " Nothing hitherto was ever stranded—cast aside ; but all, were it only a withered leaf, works together with all ; is borne forward on the bottomless, shoreless flood of action, and lives through perpetual metamorphoses."—*Carlyle*.

matter, the same substance—call it what we may—mineral, vegetable, or animal. Only, in one case life is wanting; in the other two life is present.

Now let us sum up the few facts we have noticed. We have found that the same matter runs through the earth, the plants, and the animals; that these make all sorts of exchanges one with another; that all the exchange-process is transacted by that wonderful agent which we call life; that during all this never-ending business nothing is lost, but that what one throws away as useless is immediately snatched up and used by another.

Does this look as if these things had more than one Maker? If there were two or more makers, would it be likely that the work of one would exactly fit into the work of the other in every respect? that the object or intention of one would exactly agree with the object or intention of another? that the material used by the one would be the same as, or capable of changing with, the material used by the other?

If there were more than one Maker, would it be likely that the earth and every particle in it would be acted upon by one fixed and never-changing law or rule; that the great planets, which twinkle only like little sparks in the sky, would (as we know they do) all follow the same law or rule;¹ that all the animals would be made in such a way as to breathe *one* air, and all the plants in such a

¹ The law of gravitation. And modern discoveries by means of spectrum analysis have shown that the same chemical elements that form the material of the earth, form also the material of stars whose distance is beyond computation.

way as to breathe one *other* air ; and, above all, that there would be plain and evident in all the works of creation on our earth *one* main object, namely, the good of all living creatures ?

The thing is impossible. Two or more makers cannot be. If such a work as the steam-engine required one master-mind to design it, what shall we say of the world, where we find thousands of objects—each more wonderful, more lasting, more perfect than the steam-engine—and all fitting exactly into one another, and pointing to one object—*Life* ?

There can be but one conclusion—that the world must have been designed by *one* Master-mind ; that there is but *one God*, the Creator and Ruler of all things created.

After reading all this long argument, and coming to this conclusion, I dare say you wonder how it was that, in olden times, there were so many people—and some very clever people, too—who believed in several gods.

I will try to explain to you how it was. And when I have finished, I think you will find that the explanation affords another proof of the Unity of God.

The nations who worshipped several gods saw the works of the Creation with eyes like our eyes, but not with thoughts like our thoughts. They would view the sun as the source of light, which made their fields fertile and their gardens gay. Then they would view the rain as a source of gloom,

and as an enemy of the sun, because it often, when in excess, spoilt their crops, undoing all the good which the sun had accomplished. Then they would consider the wind as an enemy of the rain, because it dried it up, and thus undid the rain's work.

So when they saw the different powers of nature fighting with each other, and one undoing the work of the other, they thought each power had a separate god which ruled it.

And this idea they carried still further. They saw that men were ruled by different virtues, vices, and passions. They saw one, all of whose deeds were caused by the ruling passion of Revenge, another actuated by Love, another by Hatred, another by Ambition, another by Avarice, another by Patriotism, another by Philanthropy, and so on; and they found such very different results produced by these different men, that they imagined the various virtues, vices, and passions which led them or drove them on to these different results, must each have a different god.

Besides, they often saw in one and the same man, perhaps in themselves (as we find in ourselves), good passions and bad passions fighting with one another, sometimes the one and sometimes the other gaining the victory.

And thus it happened that they had a multitude of gods—a god of the sun, a god of the rain, gods of the winds, and a god of the waves; for they saw so many different and opposed effects produced, that they were led to think each effect must have had a cause which was itself a distinct creator.

Of course you and I know this idea to have been very absurd. And I really think that many of the clever people of those days must have thought so themselves ; for some of them, in their books, made their gods cut a very funny figure, representing them as doing all sorts of ungodly things. But certainly there were millions who really believed in all these gods. And we must not laugh at them ; for, in truth, they knew no better.

You see how their idea of a number of gods arose. They noticed the sun, and noticed the rain, and noticed the wind ; they saw the effects of each, but did not think of the effect of all put together. They saw that one power moistened the earth, and the other dried it ; that one parched the earth, and the other cooled it ; but they did not see that it was the moistening and drying, the parching and cooling, which, all put together, made the crops grow.

So, too, in the affairs of men ; they saw the love and the hatred, the charity and the revenge, the avarice and the ambition, the good and the evil, pulling different ways ; but they did not see that all these opposites put together kept the world of men always in movement, always in that state of activity of mind and body which is a necessity of man's nature. In a word, they did not look at the world as we have been looking at it—as a *whole* ; and did not notice—indeed, did not know—how all these parts fitted into each other, and formed the whole.

But, happily, we know better. We know that

these powers of Nature, which by themselves would produce such opposite effects, together balance one another ; and it is this *balance of power* which affords another proof that there is but one Creator and Ruler of the world.

I will try to explain what I mean by an example taken from the affairs of men. I dare say some of you read a newspaper ; and those who do not, hear now and then what is going on in the world. Now, you will almost always find a great fuss being made about some ambitious nation or another becoming too strong, or trying to become too strong, or endeavouring to master its weaker neighbour. When such things take place, you will generally find that the rulers of the other nations put their heads together and say that the thing ought not to be, lest it should disturb the "balance of power" ; in other words, lest the ambitious nation should become too powerful, and swallow up all the little nations. So, you see, the "balance of power" is maintained by one nation watching the other very closely, and keeping it in check.

Well, sometimes the ambitious nation says, "I *won't* be kept in check ; I *will* swallow up my weak neighbour." And perhaps he will try to make out that his weak neighbour is wicked and barbarous, and deserves to be swallowed up ; or perhaps he will try to show that his weak neighbour doesn't mind being swallowed up, and, indeed, rather likes it. Then there begins a terrible dispute, and perhaps the nations come to blows, and there is a long and frightful war. Generally it

ends in changes which are scarcely improvements, and usually the "balance of power" is maintained; but sometimes it has ended in the ambitious nation becoming more powerful, till it goes on, year after year, greedily adding fresh provinces to its empire. Such a state of things never lasts, but while it lasts it is very inconvenient and very burdensome.

Perhaps you now see how important this "balance of power" is, and how difficult it is to preserve it in the affairs of men.

But in Nature—that is, in the works of God—it is very different. There, the balance of power is quite as indispensable; for, without it, we should now and then have all our houses blown down by a hurricane, all our fields burnt by the sun's heat, or all the inhabitants of the earth swept away by a deluge; for, without speaking of the other forces of Nature, the winds, the sun, and the rain would be quite strong enough to produce such results, if they were not held in check.

Yet all the forces of Nature are so nicely balanced that, while each performs its work, it works without destroying. Now and then, indeed, there are slight, very slight, departures from the balance of power, but very soon it restores itself by some convulsion, affecting but a small portion of the earth, such as an earthquake, a whirlwind, or a thunderstorm. These are destructive sometimes, but they are no doubt for the general good, evil though they may at the time appear to be. We know and see the good of a thunderstorm; perhaps

we may some day, when we shall have grown more clever, see the good of an earthquake.

Be that as it may, the balance of power is the rule of Nature, and the exceptions above named, if carefully examined, will be seen to have for their object the enforcement of the rule.

Well, what do you think this proves? I know what your answer will be. I am sure you will say that the forces of Nature cannot have separate and independent rulers, as the kingdoms of the earth have; that, as all the forces of Nature pulling in different and sometimes opposite ways, and each performing different useful work, still balance one another, and balance one another *exactly*, there must be but One Creator who created these forces, but One who governs them.

And so you will believe in the Unity or oneness of God.

CHAPTER III

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GOD

If you had a friend living a long way off, whom you had never seen, but who had always been very kind to you, frequently sending you presents, and paying you great attention in various ways, you would, I think, be very desirous of knowing all about this unseen friend.

You would try to find out what his likings and dislikings were, so that you might do something to please him. And if you had some idea that, one day or another, this unseen friend intended to send for you, and that if he then were pleased with you he would make you very happy, you would, I am sure, be most anxious to get all the information you could about this good friend.

You would inquire whether he received any news of your sayings and doings, and would endeavour to discover every peculiarity of his character. You would, moreover, try to find some one who had seen this friend, so that you might learn all about him; but if you could not discover any person who had seen him, you would endeavour to find out his character in another way. You would think over all the presents he had sent you, and the manner in which they were sent, and the quantity in which they were supplied, and the

purpose of each, and you would thereby be able to arrive at a pretty good guess of what your friend's character was like.

All this is supposing that you had never received from him any messages or letters, which would save you the trouble of guessing in the way I have described.

Now you and I have such a friend, and his name is GOD, and I have already shown you that we have only *one* such Friend. Neither you nor I have ever seen Him, but we receive presents from Him every day.

I dare say that you feel grateful to this good Friend, and would like to please Him. I dare say, too, that you have some sort of notion (which I hope will soon ripen into a belief) that He will one of these days send for you; and you, therefore, would like to act in such a way that you will stand well in the opinion of this great Friend—the one and only God.

But before you can do this, you feel that you ought to know something about His power, His nature, His character, His likings and dislikings. This is what we mean when we talk of the *attributes of God*.

Well, let us see if we can find some of the information we want from the splendid gifts this great Friend has sent us. We shall afterwards see that He has sent us messages, in various ways, and that from them we can learn still more. But we will talk of the messages another time, and just now think only of the gifts.

God has given us the earth to live upon. What a magnificent present! Of how many thousands of presents does it consist! If we lived hundreds of years, we should never be able to count the treasures it contains, never grow tired of the beauties it exhibits. Well, I believe we shall conclude, after thinking a little about this splendid present, that He who gave it to us is good, kind, wise, and merciful. Let us try.

What a beautiful world it is! There is everything to charm the sight. The face of Nature is so fair that we never tire of it. The fields and the forests, the heavens and their hosts, the glorious sea—the grandest thing on earth—all delight our senses, whether we look broadly over the whole, or minutely into each little part.¹

Think of the flowers, so sweet to the smell, so charming to the sight, filling our houses with fragrance and cheerfulness! Think of the food so bountifully supplied—necessaries of life, but yet so agreeable to the sense of taste as to render the satisfying of hunger one of the great pleasures of life! Think of the fresh air of Heaven, how balmy, how grateful to the senses, as we breathe it without an effort, or as its gentle breezes play upon our faces, enliven our limbs, and fan the flame of life! Think of the joys of the heart and of the soul, the emotions of love, of gratitude, of realised hope, and the proud sense of right in a conscience satisfied. It is a splendid place, this world of ours!

¹ Goethe beautifully describes the world as "the garment of God." Cf. Psalm civ. 1, 2.

But I fancy you saying : " Pray stop ; do not go on so fast." I fancy you reminding me that you have heard of such things as disease, want, suffering in many frightful forms, hatred, crime—many, many shocking things that will hardly bear thinking about. I fancy you reminding me, too, that though the mountains look so beautiful, there are such things as volcanoes, pouring out devouring torrents of liquid fire ; that though the sea is so grand, so splendid a sight, there are such things as shipwrecks ; that though the birds sing so sweetly, and though their plumage is so lovely, there are such things as vultures and eagles who live only by the death of other animals.

Well, well ! You are quite right to remind me of all these things. We shall never get on if we shut our eyes to the truth.

Let me tell you, then, that there are many matters which we can never know during our life on earth, and among these there is none so impossible to know *for certain* as the reason for so much evil in the world. But a little thought will bring us to a conclusion probably not far from the truth.

Something within us tells us that there is a world beyond this ; that when we die, we shall live elsewhere in a happier and a better state. We are taught this at home and at school ; and to you and me, who have learnt this from other sources than our own thoughts and feelings, it may be difficult to think that this idea of a future state would come into our heads naturally, without any teaching. Nevertheless this would be the case.

The most savage nations, and those neglected members of the civilised races, who are perhaps more degraded than savages, have the notion of a future life implanted in their breasts, not merely as a hope, but as a conviction.

It would seem, moreover, that this world is a place of preparation for the future world; that here we have to make ourselves fit for the enjoyment of everlasting life, and that our enjoyment of the next world will depend on our conduct in this. This notion is perhaps as deeply implanted in the mind as is the main idea of a future state. The most savage nations think that their heroes who die in battle—according to their ideas, the most noble end—will have the rewards dearest to them in the world to come; and in civilised communities, even the most uneducated and neglected of human beings, who perhaps never think of a God ruling the world, yet have some vague idea that their crimes will be punished in a world beyond this.

You and I believe in a future state, in which we shall be rewarded or punished in accordance with our conduct in this world; and if we are asked why we believe it, we shall perhaps find no better nor more valid reason than the wonderful fact that *we are prepared to believe it without a reason*.¹ If this world be regarded as a mere place of preparation for the next world, there is not much difficulty in accounting for the presence of so much evil. Let us try to account for it by a familiar illustration.

¹ See p. 49 *seq.* below; and Part II. chap. xiii.

Suppose that, at school, you were not compelled to learn, but were allowed to do whatever you liked, so that if you felt inclined to talk, or to have a game, or to go out for a walk during school hours, you could do so, without your master finding fault with you ; would the master who so indulged you be really kind ? Silly and thoughtless children might perhaps think he was ; but you know better. You know that you go to school for the purpose of learning those things which will be useful to you when you grow older. If you attend to your studies at school, you will get on in the world ; you will become clever and good, and people will respect and love you.

It is, therefore, the duty of your master to see that you do attend to your studies. The good master will always do this. Sometimes he will encourage you by fair words, by smiles, and by presenting you with prizes ; at other times, he may find it necessary to speak angrily to you, to frown at you, or perhaps even to punish you. Now, the sensible master, who occasionally frowns and punishes you, is your best friend ; while the foolish instructor, who always indulges your fancies and your frolics, is in fact your enemy.

I know it is difficult for you to see this at the time. While you are being punished, you feel angry with your teacher, and think him too harsh ; but the time will come when you will see things in their true light. When you have left school, you will feel thankful to him who checked your indolence by wholesome punishment, and

will despise him who encouraged it by his indulgence.

Now, if you consider this life as a place of preparation for a happier and better life, you must regard the world as a school in which your soul is to be educated and trained, so as to fit it for a happy destiny in the next world. Thus it is that God acts towards us as a wise instructor. He calls into activity the noble impulses of our soul, and checks its evil tendencies. Sometimes He causes the light of His countenance to shine upon us, showering down blessings upon us, and prospering our undertakings; at other times He finds it necessary to frown upon us, to disappoint our hopes, to afflict us with disease, loss of property, or other misfortunes. But all is done for our own eventual good. You may depend upon it, that God knows how to teach us the all-important lesson, how to prepare for the future life—that He knows when to encourage, and when to chasten. You may rest assured that it would not be for our advantage if we always had things as we would wish them to be.

As if to convince us of this, God has, from time to time, allowed a few individuals in high positions to enjoy almost unlimited power and wealth. History shows us that nearly in every such instance the individuals so gifted were spoiled by their good fortune. Nero, for example, was not an inhuman man before he became Emperor of Rome. It is stated that at the beginning of his reign he could with difficulty be induced to sign the death-

warrants of murderers and other criminals. Yet, after he had enjoyed a few years of great power and prosperity, he caused his mother, his wife, and his tutor to be murdered in cold blood.

And Nero is not a solitary example of the evils resulting from unchequered good fortune. Even as children sometimes require to be checked and corrected, lest they become selfish and wilful, even so do men require trials and disappointments to recall them to a sense of duty and to improve their soul; and God is far too wise and too good a teacher to withhold the needful correction. So you see how the seeming imperfection of our earthly existence conduces to our eventual happiness; for by our very nature we require occasional sorrow and suffering.

But perhaps you may ask—Could not God, who created us, have so formed us as to have different natures? Could He not have made us so naturally inclined to do good that we should not have needed correction? I would answer, that we really know too little of God's plan to be competent to solve fully and with certainty such difficulties. We see but a very small portion of God's works; we can have but a very faint idea of the working of the providential scheme. Man is but an atom on this earth, and the earth itself is but an atom of the whole of God's great universe. When we shall see the *whole*, when the future spiritual world, with all its hidden wonders, shall be revealed to us, then we shall doubtless see that God has ordained and arranged all things for the best, and that no other

arrangement could ensure so much happiness to so many creatures.

Although the full solution of this great mystery—the mystery of the existence of evil—cannot be expected in this our little life, yet some faint glimpse of the truth may be further obtained by the help of an extension of our illustration.

Suppose that the schoolmaster offered prizes to those of his pupils who would answer a number of examination questions. Suppose that, contrary to the usual custom, he were to set very simple questions, and (to make it a very easy matter to answer them) allowed his scholars to refer to as many books as they pleased, and even to copy the answers from them. I know what you would say to this. You would object altogether to be examined on such terms. You would say: “I should not care for a prize so easily gained. The examination would not prove my merit at all. Any dunce could answer as well as I could in such circumstances. So I would rather be excused from being examined. If I gained the prize, I should not deserve it, and so would not value it.”

Now suppose a contrary state of things. Suppose the schoolmaster were to give such questions as he thought his pupils ought to be able to answer, if they had worked hard and used their time well; and suppose he left them entirely to their own resources, thinking that, with the knowledge he had conveyed to them, they ought to be well able to answer even the most difficult questions. What would you say then? You would say: “This is

a very different affair. I shall be glad to be examined upon these terms. I know I shall have to work hard to deserve the prize ; but, if I work hard, I shall gain it. And when I shall have gained it, how glad I shall be ! Such a prize will be worth having."

Let us apply this illustration. Life is our school ; God our great Schoolmaster ; everlasting happiness the prize He offers to us, His pupils. If it required no exertion on our part to obtain this prize ; if life offered no difficulties and no temptations, so that we could hardly help doing good, where would be our merit ? Our happiness would be spoilt by the thought that it had not been earned by our exertions. Therefore God, in His goodness, has ordained it otherwise. Like the wise schoolmaster, He has made the examination hard, and consequently the prize worth having. He has placed difficulties and temptations in our way, that we might battle with them and obtain the victory. To some He has made life a struggle for existence ; but doubtless He has made them proportionately strong to enable them to carry on the struggle. Every one has his sorrows, his pains, his heart-burnings, his temptations, and his difficulties. Even the most favoured are not free from them. Let us not cry over them. Let us rather remember that they are as the difficult examination questions.

And if we think how proud is our feeling of triumph when we have resisted a temptation, overcome a difficulty, struggled and conquered, perhaps we may therein catch a faint glimpse of our future

prize—eternal happiness casting its beauteous shadow before.

Then if it be true—and who shall doubt it?—that there is an eternal life, where eternal happiness is the prize of the good, there is no difficulty in accounting for the existence of evil in this world, and we see therein another and a signal mark of the goodness of our Creator. *The evil is there for man to conquer.*

And God has given him the power to conquer it. The passions are strong within us; but the will is stronger, and can vanquish them. The voice of temptation is loud; but the voice of conscience is louder, and can drown it. And so, too, in the world of matter. If the enemy be famine, man finds some mode of giving new fertility to the barren ground. If it be tempest, he has at hand the means of warding it off and protecting himself from its ravages. If it be the loss of worldly possessions, he has within himself the energy of character to take heart and to try to replace them with new. If it be disease, he finds remedies wherewith to baffle it, and even to prolong the span of life. If it be death, he has it in his power so to live as to make death itself the gate of eternal life—a passing evil for a lasting good.

Yes, there are evils in the world; but they are the main-springs to our exertions, the incentives to our toil. They are the giants with whom we have to contend boldly, manfully, and honourably. To conquer them by honest strength of purpose, is the aim and end of the great battle of life.

Thus, then, we see how evil tends to our eternal welfare. It is mixed in small proportions with the good things of this earth, gently, wisely, and kindly ; not dealt out in quantities to crush mankind, but tempered with the good, so as to strengthen the immortal soul, and make it worthy of everlasting happiness. And as for those who seem by their undeserved inheritance of physical or moral evil unable to achieve happiness, we may rely on it that God will not only make allowances, but that in His own way and at His own good time will Himself do for these unhappy children of His what they have been unable to do for themselves.

If, then, we have to guess the disposition of our Great Friend—the One and Only God—from thinking about the gifts which He has presented to us—the earth and its contents, what shall be our guess ?

Shall we guess that the Being who has given us such a beautiful place to live in, endowed us with such powers of enjoying its beauties, mingled good and that which seems to us evil so wisely, so mercifully, and so kindly, ordained apparent evil as universal good, made us so marvellously, fashioned our body and mind so wonderfully, and adapted all things to our eternal welfare, is a Being immeasurably good, merciful, and wise ?

Shall we guess this of our great Friend ? If we do, we are not likely to guess wrong.¹

¹ A portion of this chapter was written for the author by the late Rev. Barnett Abrahams.

CHAPTER IV

MORE ABOUT GOD

You are satisfied that the One and Only God, who created you, is good and merciful and wise. But I wish you to try to learn still more about Him.

I. GOD IS ETERNAL ; that is, He always *did* exist and always *will* exist. How do we know this ? We have already come to the conclusion that this beautiful world and all therein must have had one great Creator, who brought everything into being. Now, if this Great Creator did not always exist, there must have been some time when He was Himself created by some one else ; but that would be nonsense, for when we speak of a Creator, we mean a being who was the first cause of everything. There could not have been a Creator prior to the first cause or Creator of All, and, as we cannot imagine a beginning to time, we cannot imagine a beginning to God. Hence we say, we believe that God has existed for ever.

But how can we tell that God always *will* exist ? We can only judge of the future by the past, and we cannot conceive the possibility of a Creator who has always existed ever coming to an end. We cannot conceive it possible for Time and Creation to come to an end, and, while these exist,

there must always be a Creator to rule and govern the world.

2. GOD IS IMMUTABLE ; that is, He never changes. How do we know this ? You might perhaps think, that because the works of the Creator exhibit constant change, the Creator Himself must be changeable. But I can show you that this would be a very false conclusion to arrive at.

It is quite true that we see change everywhere in Nature. Without it there would be no life. But that change is always produced *in precisely the same manner*, following always in the same order. The mode or manner of change is unchangeable.

Let us give one or two examples. If you take a pound of ice and pour boiling water upon it, the ice will change, it will melt ; but, however often you try the experiment, you will find that it will always require exactly the same quantity of boiling water to melt the pound of ice. Again, if you mix sand and potash in certain fixed proportions and put them in a furnace, they will produce the substance we call glass ; but, unless you keep to those fixed proportions, the glass will not be produced.

And as it is with small matters, so is it also with greater ones. The earth itself, and all the planets, revolve around the sun, each in a period peculiar to itself, a period which is always the same. We know exactly, by calculation, to a second, when an eclipse will take place, long before it occurs. We know exactly, to a second, when there will be new moon or full moon. Indeed, everything in Nature has always been found to be so regular that

people in olden times called any fixed order of things, observed everywhere, "a law of Nature." They ought to have called it a law of the Creator.

If the laws of the Creator are thus unchangeable, what must the Creator be? What must He be, who made these laws, who rules His Creation by the same fixed, everlasting rules, and who supplies daily and hourly the power or force which keeps creation in action ever in the same way? Surely He too must be free from all change—Immutable.

3. GOD IS INCORPOREAL; that is, He does not possess bodily form. If God is unchangeable, He cannot be composed of matter, or have any bodily form. For all things formed of matter, or having bodily form, are liable to change. The hardest rocks crumble to dust in course of time. Metals rust away to powder. Everything natural or formed of matter is changed by time. If then God is unchangeable, He must also be incorporeal; He must be without bodily form.

You will perhaps ask, if God has no bodily form, what is He like? Now this is a question which no mortal can possibly answer. For we cannot form a perfect idea or give a correct description of anything except by connecting with it some material qualities, such as size, shape, hardness, weight, and so on. And since God is incorporeal, and has no such material qualities, no one can say what He is like.

And if we picture to ourselves God, the Creator and Ruler of the world, as some great giant with enormous power, we shall be doing very much the

same as ignorant idolaters did, thousands of years ago, and we shall be committing a great error. We must not think of God in that way at all. When we think of our parents, and love them, we do not think so much of their looks or of their form, but of their goodness and kindness to us. Probably no one ever loved his mother any the less for her being ugly, or any the more for her being beautiful. And so we should think of God, not with regard to any bodily likeness, but with regard to His qualities. We should think of His goodness and kindness to us, shown in His providing for our daily wants; of His wisdom and power, shown in the government of the world; of His mercy and forbearance, shown in His permitting sinners to live that they may repent of their wickedness; and if we think of all these qualities, we need no other picture of God.¹

4. GOD IS OMNISCIENT AND OMNIPRESENT; that is, He knows and sees everything that happens in the world that He has created. He, who creates and regulates all things, must surely have a perfect view and knowledge of all that goes on through His vast creation, and not only a knowledge, but, as there is design in all He has created, also a foreknowledge, a knowledge of things before they take place, a foreknowledge of the result of His work.

For how could it be otherwise? To regulate the works of the Creation and the course of events,

¹ "Assuredly there is no more lovely worship of God than that for which no image is required, but which springs up in our breast spontaneously, when Nature speaks to the Soul, and the Soul speaks to Nature face to face."—*Goethe*.

requires a knowledge of all things existing, and of every power, thought or instinct, moving or influencing them. Surely the great Creator must know everything which He has formed, and His power must be present everywhere among His works, though we see Him not ; for we discern His watchful care in all things. He who is the Creator of every cause, and who has ordained the law by which that cause should produce a certain fixed effect, must surely be aware of the effect ; for both effect and cause are of His creation. So God must know everything. He or His mighty power must pervade all space. How careful, then, should we be of our actions ! How careful even of our thoughts ! For they are ever open to the gaze of the God who made us.

5. GOD IS OMNIPOTENT ; that is, He is all-powerful. Let us first try to understand what this means. We mean that nothing that can be imagined possible to be done, is too great or too wonderful for the power of God to accomplish.

I use the words "possible to be done" not to put a limit or boundary to God's power, but to put a limit or boundary to our own belief ; for no one should ask you to believe a thing that is impossible. For example, we cannot believe it possible for anything to be wet and dry at the same time, hard and soft at the same moment, white and black at the same instant. We cannot believe it possible for two bodies to occupy the same space at the same time, or for the part of a thing to be greater than the whole. Such things you would

call *impossible* ; and if any one told you " You only require Faith to enable you to believe those things to be possible which seem to you physically impossible," you would reply, " Faith cannot make a man believe that to be possible which cannot be even *understood* to be possible. I cannot believe a thing which is inconsistent with all belief, and which even contradicts itself. I set no bounds nor limits to the power of God, but I cannot profess to believe a thing which appears to me impossible, because self-contradictory."

This would be a very proper answer for you to make.

When, then, we say that we believe that God is Omnipotent, or All-powerful, or Almighty, we mean that nothing possible is too wonderful or too great for Him to do. We see His mighty power wherever we turn—in the giant mountains and in the vast deep, in the peaceful valleys and in the flowing streams, in the swift whirlwind and in the rolling thunder, in the rustling breeze and in the gentle dews. We see His power in the life which lives and reproduces life, in the birds and beasts and fishes, in the trees and shrubs and flowers, and in *ourselves*, favoured above all beings. We see His power in the earthquake and volcano ; in the splendid sun, the gentle moon, and all the hosts of heaven—countless beyond number, great beyond measure, stretching through space beyond limit.

Looking at these His glorious works, and remembering, too, that He rules and regulates all of them by His own Power and Will, who shall

say that there can be a limit to the power of God ? He moves worlds, and keeps them ever moving. Can we imagine anything requiring greater power ? He gives life, and makes that life bring forth fresh life, without end. Can we imagine anything greater than the power of the Great Being who works such wonders ? Surely not ! And therefore it is that we say that God's power is immeasurably great ; and that is what we mean by saying that God is Omnipotent, All-powerful.

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Thus we have learnt the attributes of the Creator from His works. We have examined the presents He—our Great Friend—has sent us, and learnt therefrom His character. They show us that He is One, that He is good, merciful, and wise, that He lives for ever, that He never changes, that He possesses no bodily form, that He knows and sees everything, and that He is Almighty.

When we think of these attributes—all centred in One Mighty Being, the Creator of the World—and then think of ourselves, short-lived, weak, ignorant, and imperfect, we wonder gratefully at the goodness of the Eternal God, and feel that it should be a pleasure and a duty to love, honour, and reverence Him, and to strive to obey His Holy Will, if we do but know it.

CHAPTER V

MAN AND HIS POSITION

IF I ask you what you are, you will reply, "A human being"; and as the words escape your lips, you will feel a certain sensation of pride in making this reply. You may, perhaps, remember that you are a very helpless creature; very weak, very small; oh, so small compared with the great earth—so ridiculously small compared with the mighty universe; but the idea will still be uppermost in your mind, "I am superior to the handsomest bird that soars through the skies; I am nobler than the noblest beast that roams proudly through the forests."

If this idea rises in your mind, as I hope it will, you will be right to give play to it—right to encourage it. But your pride must not be the pride of the rich man who looks down with disdain on persons of lowly station, exclaiming, "See how rich I am! what a wonderful fellow I must be!" It should be the pride of the rich man who wonders to himself, "How is it God has made me so rich? Proud as I am of my riches, I should be prouder still, if I knew how to use those riches well. What shall I do to deserve such blessings?"

Oh, how rich you are! Let us count your riches.

The beasts of the field and the fowls of the air have no recognisable speech. The wild beast roars ever the same note; the birds sing ever the same tune. Their enjoyments are few, because their wants are so few. They live, they eat, they drink, they sleep, they bring forth young, they die—that is the life-history of every bird, beast, reptile, and fish. No improvement, no progress. The bird builds its nest to-day precisely as did its forefathers centuries ago.

But with you, how different! Let us count your riches. You have speech—the power of conveying your thoughts, your feelings, and your wishes to those around you. Your voice is unlike any other voice in creation. What varieties of feeling it can express! With it you may laugh, or you may cry; with it you may express your admiration or your disgust, your love, your pity, or your scorn. The same words spoken in different tones will have different meanings.

Then think of the music of the voice. The cuckoo never tires of her two notes, and knows no others; the nightingale, with a voice of wider range, yet only knows one song. But man can do much more than these. He can combine his notes without limit, and make sweet music to echo every thought; as many songs as thoughts—without number.

Then reflect upon your face. You may be plain or handsome, it matters not; there is that in your face which is a treasure beyond price—the power of expression. The voice utters words, but

it is the face which speaks. The voice of pity is sweet ; but how much more eloquent the pitying look, the moist eye, the face suffused with sympathy ! The voice of anger is terrible ; but what its effect without the lowering brow, the flaming eye, the pouting lips, the distended nostrils, the fallen countenance ?

Then think of the noble form of man. He is the only animal that stands naturally upright. Some animals there are, indeed, which, from their habit of climbing, assume something like the erect attitude ; but it is always forced and unnatural ; and the creature seems to be glad to walk on all its legs again. Those long fore-legs which, as they swing gracelessly by the monkey's side, seem to try to make us believe that they are arms, soon drop listlessly to the ground. The legs will be legs. The animal must walk bent to the earth. Even the gorilla, that nearest approach to man, though its strength is enormous, soon becomes fatigued when it walks in an erect position. The beast looks downwards, man upwards. There is something noble in the attitude of even the meanest man.

But if man has cause to be proud of his superiority over the brute creation, on account of his form, his attitude, and other qualities of his body, he has still greater cause for pride in the qualities of his mind ; for they are qualities which he alone of all animals possesses, and which are wholly absent in the brute creation.

On man alone is bestowed the gift of Reason—

that power by which you can put facts together, and draw therefrom conclusions, or new facts arising from those with which you were previously acquainted. Some have maintained that the brute shares this gift with man, but only in a less degree, and that what we call instinct is but a low kind of reason. But it matters little by what name you call it. You know full well that the most sagacious brute never does anything which could indicate what you call close reasoning. Its senses are keen, and it readily distinguishes friend from foe; its appetites are keen, and its senses guide the creature to the means of satisfying its cravings. It has its attachments and aversions, memory, hatred of a foe, and gratitude to a benefactor; but in spite of its experience and memory, it shows no increase of intelligence after it has once reached maturity.

Man alone is an improving animal. You improve because you have the desire to improve, and Reason and Free-will afford you the means of improving. Man does not accept the position in which he is born as a fate. His Free-will gives him the power of rising superior to adverse circumstances. No man is ever truly contented. The striving for something higher is the blessed distinction of our race. Without it, you would settle down in life like the beasts of the forest, careless of the future, callous to improvement. The desire of improvement spurs you to healthy action, gives you a relish for the duties of life, and bids you try to leave the world better than you found it.

But that same desire of improvement does not end its mission when it has tended to the increase of knowledge, and the advancement of those arts which mark the distinction between civilised and barbaric life. The desire of improvement gives birth to that noblest of all desires—the hope of a future and better state.

And here again you feel the proud position of man. You feel that you have a Soul within you, a Spirit which can never perish, which must live, when your body will have decayed and crumbled into dust. You feel that it is this soul that sets in motion all your thoughts, your feelings, your reasoning, your judgment, and all the powers of your mind. You feel that it is this soul that bids you improve, that makes you dissatisfied even with the greatest worldly happiness, that tells you that the fulness of happiness is in a world beyond this.

If there were need to prove that this soul is immortal, you could not have a better proof than your own hopes—the hopes of all men. You would feel horrified if you were told that when your life here comes to an end, your soul would perish, and be annihilated. Your soul recoils from such an idea. Your fond hope, and the hope of every human being, is a happy immortality. And this universal hope is one of the best proofs of the immortality of the soul; for surely that God, whose greatest attribute is kindness, would not have breathed into you and every man so noble a hope, and so holy an aspiration, without giving you the means and power of realising them. Your

soul must be immortal, because an all-merciful Creator has bid you hope for immortality.

If a further proof were wanted of the soul's existence in a life hereafter, we might find one in the history of every human being, however lofty or however lowly his position. Everything in creation has an object and purpose. If there be no hereafter for man, what is the object, what is the purpose of his life? Surely not the objects and purposes he attains in this world.

Take, for example, the life of a poor labouring man. He works hard all the days of his life, and all his wages are a morsel of bread. He has few enjoyments, few comforts; and the older he gets, the more difficult he finds it to earn a livelihood, the more burdensome his existence becomes.

Perhaps he is more fortunate than such men usually are. Perhaps, as he grows old, his children love, honour, and cherish him, and he thus has few troubles to weigh down his hoary head. But, however fortunate the lot of such a man, as he grows older, he will find in the world fewer and fewer attractions. Everything becomes irksome. He used to like the music of children's voices; he cannot bear it now. He used to like a nice gossip with his neighbours; he does not care for it now, for his tongue is sluggish and his memory fails him. He used to like to read what was going on in the world; but now he can read no more: his sight is too weak; and if any one reads to him, he is nervous. Ask him, "What would you like,

my good old man ? ” and he will reply, “ Nothing, thank you. Let me sit quietly in my old arm-chair, next a roaring fire. Let me sit there quietly, doing nothing ; only thinking.”

Can this be the end for which this good old man has been labouring hard and working well all his life ?

Take another case. Take, for example, the life of a great statesman. He has worked very hard for the public good. Early and late he has laboured to improve the condition of his fellow-creatures. Suppose the most favourable state of things. His services have been successful, and have been fully valued. The nation honours him ; the great men of the earth court him ; and people say he is one of the greatest men of the age. And he has a loving family who almost adore him. As for riches, he has more than he can ever care to increase. What more can he have of the good things of this world ? And yet—and yet, though this great man has attained the summit of his worldly ambition, he is not happy. He is growing very old. He cannot help himself. He can scarcely walk. He goes to the Senate, the scene of his former triumphs, and people listen to a tremulous voice from lips which used to thunder forth fervid eloquence ; and as they listen, fondly catching every syllable, mutter to themselves, “ What a wonderful old man ! but how different from what he was ! ” And then he knows himself how he has changed. He sees that the words of younger men have greater weight than his. So he enjoys the

world no more. Day by day he becomes weaker. Even his high position weighs heavily upon him, bringing him responsibilities which he is too weak to bear. What can he do but follow the example of the poor old labourer, and sit quietly by the fireside, musing on the past ?

And can this be the end for which this great and noble old man has been labouring hard and working well all his life ? Impossible. There must be a higher end in a world beyond this. There must be an existence in a future state, where the worker of good meets an eternal reward.

The two examples we have cited have been the most favourable examples that could be named—examples of men who, as far as their worldly hopes could reach, have, each in his own sphere, had those hopes amply fulfilled. But you must know well that the majority of the human race are not so fortunate. We are not all born to a happy life, not all destined to be heroes. The great bulk of the human race is made up of hard workers, whose life is almost a struggle for existence, whose happiness is chequered with many misfortunes, and whose worldly hopes are seldom half fulfilled. Surely, then, the aims and objects of their lives are not to be found in this world.

And worldly happiness is, at best, but a very partial kind of happiness. One man longs to attain riches, and thinks he will have arrived at the summit of happiness if he becomes a rich man. He works hard, and becomes rich. And when he is rich, do you think he has attained happi-

ness? Another man longs for knowledge—a more worthy longing. He studies hard; he travels; he searches for truth everywhere, and becomes a very learned man; and when he has acquired all this knowledge, what is his happiness? He has the small gratification of feeling that he knows a little more than his fellow-creatures; but he has learnt, among other things, the humiliating fact, that the more knowledge he has acquired, the more extensive has the field of knowledge become to him. The more he explores, the greater the extent of unexplored territory that rises before him.

And so with the object of every earthly hope, every earthly ambition that we foster in our heart. It looks beautiful, it seems perfect happiness at a distance. But when attained, there seems always something wanting to make the happiness complete. We always crave for something more.

What does all this show? Does it not distinctly indicate that if happiness be the wages for toil, our wages are not paid in this world? Does not the very fact that our powers of enjoying worldly pleasures diminish as we grow older plainly indicate that the great storehouse of happiness is in a future world?

Yes. Wherever we look, we see facts which point clearly to the conclusion that this life is a preparation for another life; that happiness may certainly be found on earth, but that perfect happiness cannot be attained in this life; that we are constituted to improve, that we are placed here to improve; that our improvement leads to our

happiness ; that this world is a world of work, but that the real wages will be paid in a world beyond this.¹

¹ Even John Stuart Mill, who is sceptical enough on the subject of Immortality on purely logical grounds, sums up his conclusions by admitting that the hope of a destiny after Death "is legitimate and philosophically defensible." Almost unconsciously he seems to admit that hope to be a necessary of life, without which all human effort would be "not worth while." He writes: "The beneficial effect of such a hope is far from trifling. It makes life and human nature a far greater thing to the feelings, and gives greater strength as well as greater solemnity to all the sentiments which are awakened in us, by our fellow-creatures and by mankind at large. It allays the sense of that irony of Nature, which is so painfully felt when we see the exertions and sacrifices of a life culminating in the formation of a wise and noble mind, only to disappear from the world when the time had just arrived at which the world seems about to begin reaping the benefit of it. The truth that life is short and art is long is from of old one of the most discouraging parts of our condition. This hope admits the possibility that the art employed in improving and beautifying the soul itself may avail for good in some other life, even when seemingly useless for this. But the benefit consists less in the presence of any specific hope than in the enlargement of the general scale of the feelings ; the loftier aspirations being no longer in the same degree checked and kept down by a sense of the insignificance of human life—by the disastrous feeling of 'not worth while.'"—*Three Essays on Religion* (by John Stuart Mill), p. 249.

CHAPTER VI

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

THE real wages will be paid in the world beyond this. In the world to come, every man will receive the requital to which his actions in this world entitle him.

But you will say, "We know nothing of the next world. How can we talk about such matters?" To a certain extent you are right. No one has ever come back from that great unknown territory to tell us what is the reward of the pious, and what the punishment of the wicked.

And it is well that our knowledge upon this subject is wrapped in uncertainty. For if we knew exactly the nature and extent of the reward or punishment payable for each of our actions, there would be no such thing as pure motive, and consequently there would be no merit in doing right and avoiding wrong.

Men would balance and weigh their sacrifices and their restraints here against the happiness resulting therefrom in a future state, would probably find it worth their while to be good and moral, and would be so not because it was right, but because it was profitable. But would the happiness re-

sulting from such a commercial kind of virtue be pure happiness ? I think not.

Suppose you go to school with your work well prepared, and that you have accomplished the task set you by dint of great industry and perseverance ; and suppose that your teacher is so pleased with your work that he gives you a prize, which you never had the least idea he would bestow, you will feel delighted at receiving such a reward. Your delight will be of the purest kind ; for you will feel not only pleased at receiving the prize, but you will feel proud at having received it as a *token* of your industry, and not as a *payment* for your industry. The knowledge which you will thus have acquired will also give you an unusual degree of satisfaction ; for you will feel that you have acquired that knowledge for the love of knowledge, and not for the sake of any benefit that you might derive from it.

Next, suppose that your teacher set to his class this very same difficult task, telling you and all his pupils that whoever performed the task to his satisfaction should receive a prize, I dare say you would try to gain it, and I hope you would succeed. But if you did, I am sure your pleasure would be very different from what it was when you gained the other prize, without it having been promised to you. You would work for the prize, not for the knowledge ; and when you took the prize, you would feel as if you had taken a sort of bribe to do something which was, after all, only right and proper that you should have done without any

bribe. And, besides the happiness being less pure, the knowledge acquired would be less pure, and, probably, more easily lost.

And so it would be, if our great Master, our Creator, had announced to us the reward in store for us in a future life for every good action, and the punishment for every sin. The happiness derived from the reward would not be pure happiness. But, with the uncertainty of our knowledge as to the reward and punishment, virtue is truly its own reward on earth, and the happiness, be it great or small, which will be our prize in heaven will be a pure, a holy, an unsullied happiness. It will be unsullied by the sordid feeling that we had been bribed to do the right thing.

So you see that the uncertainty as to the nature and extent of reward and punishment in a future state is a positive advantage to us. But notwithstanding this uncertainty as to nature and extent, that such reward and punishment must exist is sufficiently clear. Let us reflect upon the subject, and see how it is that we must believe it.

In everyday life, we frequently see bad men prospering, and good men—honest, industrious, and religious men—whose labours end all in disappointment, who are stricken by poverty or disease, and who are ever bowed down under the weight of their misfortunes.

God is just; and even though these cases may be exceptional, He cannot be unjust even in these exceptional cases. Now, if there were no punishment in a future life for the wicked man who

prospers in this world, and no reward in a future life for the good man who is unfortunate in this world, would such a state of things be consistent with the perfect justice of God? We know not fully the ways of God; but we know for certain that He is just; and justice requires that the wicked man who prospers here shall be punished hereafter, if not actively, at least by remorse, and that the good man who is unfortunate here should receive the reward of his good deeds in a future state.¹

And even apart from these considerations, when we reflect upon the evident aim and object of our life we shall come to the same conclusion. If we believe in the immortality of the soul—and who can doubt it?—we must believe that we are here in this world for some purpose connected with the everlasting state, which is to follow our present life. For what other purpose can this be than to improve the qualities of our soul, to prove our worthiness to receive heavenly happiness, and, above all, to enable us in part to *earn* that happiness by deserving it? Just as the bread is sweetest for which we have to toil the hardest, just as the child is dearest for whom we have to suffer most anxiety, so is the happiness greatest for which we have to work the most.

¹ "If death only had been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls" (Plato's *Phædo* (Jowett), p. 107). But there is a sense in which the future life is more *necessary* for the wicked than for the good, a life in which the wicked may be purified and brought near to the God who made them.

So we are here to earn the everlasting happiness, which will only be true happiness if we shall have fairly earned it by working for it and *deserving* it. We all have trials and temptations placed in our way ; and he deserves eternal reward the most who overcomes them. We all have passions and vices, and he earns best his title to everlasting reward who conquers them. We all have opportunities of doing good to our fellow-creatures, of improving our own minds, of contributing also, each in his own small way, to the improvement of the world. He who does this work well, deserves and earns the highest reward of immortal life.

But if, on the contrary, we submit to the dictates of our passions, if we encourage our vices, if we lead a selfish life, setting a bad example to those who are sure to copy us, if we abuse our opportunities, if we are dishonest to our neighbours, if we stifle the voice of conscience, if we transgress the laws of morality, if we forget all else in our love of wealth and worldly position, can we expect a reward in a future life from a just God ? Must we not rather expect a long term of remorse for spending a life ill, uselessly, mischievously, and wickedly, for neglecting golden opportunities, for abusing the wonderful powers with which we are endowed ?

We know not what may be the nature or degree of the reward or of the punishment. These are

“Things which the invisible King,
Only omniscient, has suppressed in night.”

—Milton.

No man can, in the real sense, *earn* such a boon as immortal life; nor can any man *lose* it. But we are sure that in some way reward awaits the good, and at least absence of reward awaits the wicked. Every man is responsible for his deeds. According to his work, so will be his wages in the world to come.¹ The wicked are not in hopeless case, but the good are full of hope.

¹ The arguments in this and the preceding chapter will be found further developed in Part II. chap. xii.